

Bush hands President-elect troubled times

## Iraq asks Clinton to cease attacks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Fresh air battles erupted over northern Iraq on Tuesday and additional U.S. warships sailed to the region as the Bush administration prepared to hand its troubled relationship with Iraq to President-elect Clinton.

President Bush's spokesman said the White House wanted to see action backing up the Iraqi offer to cease firing at allied planes in its "no-fly zones." The incoming Clinton administration, too, said it wanted more than words. Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council — headed by Saddam Hussein — said there would be no attacks on U.S., French or British planes in a gesture of good will starting at midnight on Clinton's Inauguration Day.

The move came after Iraq asked Clinton to abandon the allied air raid campaign, asserting that continued attacks would not force cooperation by Baghdad.

"There is a cease-fire regimen in place in U.N. Resolution 687, and if Iraq complies with that, then there should be no problem," said presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

George Stephanopoulos, Clinton communications director, said Iraq's offer did nothing

to change the fact that the new administration expects "full compliance with all the requirements of the U.N. resolutions."

"We need to see Iraq change its behavior," Stephanopoulos said.

At the Pentagon, spokesman Pete Williams termed the offer "a helpful sign." But "more important than any statement is action," he said, citing the two issues that have drawn Iraq and the allies into military confrontation repeatedly in recent weeks.

He said Iraq must: — Stop firing on U.S., British and French aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones in the north and south, take its anti-aircraft missiles out of firing status and store them.

— Agree to the weapons inspections demanded by the United Nations.

Both Williams and Fitzwater denied the Bush administration would steer clear of force against the Iraqi military if provoked in the final hours before Clinton is sworn in at noon EST on Wednesday.

"We continue to watch Iraq's behavior. We certainly would not hesitate to respond if necessary," said Fitzwater.

About 2:30 a.m. EST Tuesday, Iraqi missile and radar installations "locked on" a U.S. F-4G "Wild Weasel," which fired an anti-radar

HARM missile at the site, located some 14 miles east of the city of Mosul, Williams said.

"We're not certain of the results," he said.

About an hour later, a U.S. Air Force F-16 drew Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery fire, but did not return the fire, Williams said.

In a third incident at 5:30 a.m. EST at a different location, two F-16s were fired on by Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery. They dropped four cluster bombs at the Iraqi weaponry, but Pentagon officials "don't know the results," Williams said.

He also denied any cracks had developed among the allies, saying "they remain united" on the two critical points: Saddam must comply with U.N. resolutions and Iraq must not interfere with allied flights in the no-fly zones.

Williams said that Iraqi jets are continuing to fly just across the 36th parallel that forms the southern border of the northern no-fly zone in an attempt to lure allied aircraft into air defense traps.

"This is sticking a toe over the line," he said, indicating that the Iraqi flights are designed only to draw allied planes close enough to surface-to-air missile batteries to try to shoot them down.

At the White House, Fitzwater called Tuesday's skirmishes over northern Iraq "a defen-

## Israeli lawmakers abolish legislation

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Lawmakers on Tuesday abolished a 7-year-old law barring Israelis from meeting with PLO members, raising hopes that Arabs may agree to resume Middle East peace talks.

The vote was 39-20 in the 120-member parliament. The reason for the low turnout was not im-

mediate clear.

The decision could give a boost to Israel's negotiations with Palestinians and Arab neighbors. The Palestinians have vowed to boycott the talks until Israel allows the repatriation of more than 400 alleged Muslim extremists expelled last month.

Israel had considered the Palestine Liberation Organization a terrorist group and barred any contacts by Israelis.

Some officials have urged dropping the ban to counter the rising influence of Muslim fundamentalists.

Israeli liberals also have said that open direct negotiations with the PLO could strengthen Palestinian moderates who support Middle East peace talks.

The PLO holds considerable influence over the Palestinian delegation to the talks, which also in-

clude Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. A statement from PLO spokesman Bassam Abu-Sharif in Tunisia said "the move will pave the way to set up an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel."

He also appealed for a summit between PLO chief Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who opposed lifting the ban.

A recent survey showed nearly half of Israeli legislators favor direct negotiations with the PLO, including two-thirds of the lawmakers from Rabin's Labor Party.

Rabin staunchly opposed the idea, arguing that such contacts would force Israel to deal immediately with Palestinian demands for establishing an independent state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Government officials have acknowledged Israel is already indirectly negotiating with the PLO. Tuesday's vote annulled a 1986 amendment to Israel's anti-terror law which barred Israelis from meeting with members of terror organizations.

Violators faced up to three years in prison and several Israelis have served time for the offense. Among them was peace activist Abie Nathan.

Several Israeli legislators also have met with Arafat and other PLO officials, but were protected from prosecution by their parliamentary immunity.

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## Vote pleases PLO delegation

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liberal legislator Dedi Zucker said he expected Tuesday's vote would help "create a better atmosphere for the peace talks. This will also counter the demonization of the PLO practiced here for so many years."

Hanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, said Israel's action will "go a long way toward creat-

ing a better understanding of the PLO... and improving chances for peace."

The Palestinians remain determined to boycott peace talks until Israel repatriates more than 400 Palestinians it expelled last month to south Lebanon, Ashrawi said. Israeli peace activist Abie Nathan, said he would fly to Tunis on Wednesday to meet with Arafat to ask him for a conciliatory gesture toward Israel.

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